

342.320 Approval of attorney's and physician's fees and hospital charges -- Limits on attorney's fees -- Payment of attorney fees.

- (1) All fees of attorneys and physicians, and all charges of hospitals under this chapter, shall be subject to the approval of an administrative law judge pursuant to the statutes and administrative regulations.
- (2) In an original claim, attorney's fees for services under this chapter on behalf of an employee shall be subject to the following maximum limits:
 - (a) Twenty percent (20%) of the first twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) of the award, fifteen percent (15%) of the next ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), and five percent (5%) of the remainder of the award, not to exceed a maximum fee of twelve thousand dollars (\$12,000). This fee shall be paid by the employee from the proceeds of the award or settlement.
 - (b) Attorney-client employment contracts entered into and signed after July 14, 2000, shall be subject to the conditions of paragraph (a) of this subsection.
- (3) In approving an allowance of attorney's fees, the administrative law judge shall consider the extent, complexity, and quality of services rendered, and in the case of death, the Remarriage Tables of the Dutch Royal Insurance Institute. An attorney's fee may be denied or reduced upon proof of solicitation by the attorney. However, this provision shall not be construed to preclude advertising in conformity with standards prescribed by the Kentucky Supreme Court.
- (4) No attorney's fee in any case involving benefits under this chapter shall be paid until the fee is approved by the administrative law judge, and any contract for the payment of attorney's fees otherwise than as provided in this section shall be void. The motion for approval of an attorney's fee shall be submitted within thirty (30) days following finality of the claim. Except when the attorney's fee is to be paid by the employer or carrier, the attorney's fee shall be paid in one (1) of the following ways:
 - (a) The employee may pay the attorney's fee out of his personal funds or from the proceeds of a lump-sum settlement; or
 - (b) The administrative law judge, upon request of the employee, may order the payment of the attorney's fee in a lump sum directly to the attorney of record and deduct the attorney's fee from the weekly benefits payable to the employee in equal installments over the duration of the award or until the attorney's fee has been paid, commuting sufficient sums to pay the fee.
- (5) At the commencement of the attorney-client relationship, the attorney shall explain to the employee the methods by which this section provides for the payment of the attorney's fee, and the employee shall select the method in which his attorney's fee is to be paid. His selection and statement that he fully understands the method to be used shall be submitted by his attorney, on a notarized form signed by the employee, at the time the motion for approval of the attorney's fee is submitted. The executive director shall develop the format and content of the form to be used pursuant to this section. The form to be used shall list on its face all options

permitted in this section for the payment of an attorney's fees and contain an explanation in nontechnical language of each method.

- (6) The General Assembly declares that by the enactment of KRS 342.316(3), it is the legislative intent to encourage settlement and prompt administrative handling of those claims and thereby reduce expenses to claimants for compensation under the provisions of KRS 342.316, and the administrative law judge shall give due regard to this legislative intent in the handling of uncontested claims and the allowance of attorney's fees therein.
- (7) In a claim that has been reopened pursuant to the provisions of this chapter, an attorney's fee may be awarded by the administrative law judge subject to the limits set forth in subsection (2) of this section. In awarding the attorney's fee, the administrative law judge shall consider the factors set forth in subsection (3) of this section. If no additional amount is recovered upon reopening, no attorney's fee shall be awarded. No attorney's fee shall be allowed or approved exceeding the amounts provided in subsection (2)(a) of this section applicable to any additional amount recovered.
- (8) Attorney's fees for representing employers in proceedings under this chapter pursuant to contract with the employer shall be subject to approval of the administrative law judge in the same manner as prescribed for attorney representation of employees. Employer attorney's fees are subject to the limitation of twelve thousand dollars (\$12,000) maximum fees except that fees for representing employers shall not be dependent upon the result achieved. Employer attorney's fees may be paid on a periodic basis while a claim is adjudicated and the payments need not be approved until the claims resolution process is completed. Fees for legal services in presenting a claim for reimbursement from the Kentucky coal workers' pneumoconiosis fund shall not exceed one thousand dollars (\$1,000). All such approved fees shall be paid by the employer and in no event shall exceed the amount the employer agreed by contract to pay.

Effective: July 15, 2002

History: Amended 2002 Ky. Acts ch. 246, sec. 5, effective July 15, 2002. -- Amended 2000 Ky. Acts ch. 514, sec. 24, effective July 14, 2000. -- Amended 1996 (1st Extra. Sess.) Ky. Acts ch. 1, sec. 17, effective December 12, 1996. -- Amended 1994 Ky. Acts ch. 181, Part 8, sec. 30, effective April 4, 1994. -- Amended 1990 Ky. Acts ch. 352, sec. 1, effective July 13, 1990. -- Amended 1987 (1st Extra. Sess.) Ky. Acts ch. 1, sec. 42, effective January 4, 1988. -- Amended 1974 Ky. Acts ch. 177, sec. 2. - - Amended 1972 Ky. Acts ch. 78, sec. 30. -- Amended 1970 Ky. Acts ch. 16, sec. 6. - - Amended 1964 Ky. Acts ch. 192, sec. 25. -- Amended 1956 Ky. Acts ch. 77, sec. 13. -- Amended 1952 Ky. Acts ch. 182, sec. 12. -- Recodified 1942 Ky. Acts ch. 208, sec. 1, effective October 1, 1942, from Ky. Stat. sec. 4942.

Legislative Research Commission Note (6/20/2005). 2005 Ky. Acts chs. 11, 85, 95, 97, 98, 99, 123, and 181 instruct the Reviser of Statutes to correct statutory references to agencies and officers whose names have been changed in 2005 legislation confirming the reorganization of the executive branch. Such a correction has been made in this section.